

# Climate Equity Framework



**COLORADO**  
Air Pollution Control Division  
Department of Public Health & Environment



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# Introduction

## What the Climate Equity Framework Is

The Climate Equity Framework is a guidance document that outlines ways the state can build equity considerations into the greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction rulemaking process to help achieve better outcomes for disproportionately impacted communities in Colorado. The framework is both a resource for meeting statutory requirements and a piece of Colorado's larger response to the national call to action to address two critical and interconnected issues: (1) climate change and (2) racial, environmental, and economic injustice.

In 2019, groundbreaking legislation that laid the foundation for a rapid, bold, and equitable response to climate change was adopted through [House Bill \(HB\) 19-1261: Colorado's Climate Action Plan](#). This bill amends Colorado statute and directs the Air Quality Control Commission ("the Commission") to consider and adopt certain GHG emission reduction rules. It also directs the Commission to identify communities disproportionately impacted by climate change, in part, to ensure that the actions the Commission takes to reduce climate change include strategies to also reduce harmful air pollution affecting those communities. In identifying these communities, the Commission is directed to consider communities of color, lower-income residents, and indigenous populations. The statute also states that disproportionate impacts may result from environmental degradation, as well as barriers to public participation, such as those experienced by some rural or linguistically isolated communities, for example. The statute directs the Commission to consider and prioritize the benefits of regulatory compliance, including economic, health, environmental, and resiliency benefits, to disproportionately impacted communities. Furthermore, the statute requires that impacts of potential rules on disproportionately impacted communities be evaluated and that stakeholder input be solicited on advantages of different regulatory measures, specifically soliciting input from disproportionately impacted communities.

This framework provides tools to help ensure that these requirements are being met and whenever possible, exceeded. It is just one piece of a rapidly expanding set of strategies across state government to address climate equity and environmental justice in Colorado. The framework primarily addresses the Air Pollution Control Division ("the Division") stakeholder engagement and rule development work, as well as the Commission's rulemaking process as it pertains to state GHG reduction rules.

## The State's Broader Environmental Justice Efforts

Between the release of the draft Climate Equity Framework in April 2021 and the final version being published in January 2022, lots of exciting progress to

advance environmental justice was made. This includes the creation of an Environmental Justice Unit at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the passage of state [House Bill \(HB\) 21-1266, "the Environmental Justice Act."](#) The Act declares state policy to advance environmental justice; creates the Environmental Justice Action Task Force, charged with

developing a state agency-wide environmental justice strategy (in addition to other tasks); and creates a position for an Environmental Justice Ombudsperson, who will serve as an advocate for and liaison between disproportionately impacted communities and state agencies. It also provides essential funding by establishing the Environmental Justice Grant program, which will use penalty dollars from air pollution fines to fund projects that benefit public health and environmental conditions in disproportionately impacted communities. An Environmental Justice Advisory Board, which includes representation from disproportionately impacted communities and advocacy organizations, will decide how grant funds will be distributed, among other important functions. Furthermore, the Act requires enhanced air quality modeling and monitoring within disproportionately impacted communities.

*Call to Action:  
Build equity and  
justice principles  
into Colorado's  
climate strategies.*

The Environmental Justice Act further bolsters efforts to prioritize the voices of disproportionately impacted communities by requiring enhanced outreach by the Commission for rulemaking hearings, adjudicatory hearings, and permit hearings that impact these communities. Requirements include community engagement best practices mentioned in this framework, such as providing plain-language materials in commonly spoken languages, offering meetings at various times of day and on various days of the week, and hosting meetings in communities across the state.

The Environmental Justice Act provides a preliminary definition for disproportionately impacted communities. The Environmental Justice Action Task Force may make further recommendations to refine the definition in 2022.

Disproportionately impacted communities are Census block groups that meet any of the following criteria:

- More than 40% of households are low-income, identify as people of color, or are housing cost-burdened,
- Have a history of environmental racism perpetuated through redlining, anti-Indigenous, anti-immigrant, anti-Hispanic, or anti-Black laws,
- Experience cumulative environmental burden, socioeconomic stressors, and lack of public participation that contribute to persistent disparities.

Several other important pieces of legislation passed during the 2021 session that are helping advance environmental justice in Colorado:

- HB 21-1189: Air Toxics Act
- HB 21-1290: Funding Office of Just Transition
- Senate Bill (SB) 21-87: Farmworker Bill of Rights
- SB 21-181: Health Equity Act
- SB 21-249: Keep Colorado Wild Annual Pass Act
- SB 21-260: Transportation Sustainability Act
- SB 21-272: Public Utilities Commission Modernization Act

In addition to these exciting changes, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment officially declared racism as a public health crisis in April 2021 and the Commission formally supported [the declaration of racism as a public health crisis \(pdf\)](#). This declaration is an important step in drawing the connection between racism and disparate health outcomes, as well as the responsibility of the government in actively changing systems and dynamics that continue to harm people of color. The declaration commits to several things, including to “lead the charge for the active and regular use of racial equity tools and assessments in Colorado state governance and state and local public health improvement plans for more just outcomes.” Applying the guidance from this framework, using credible data and data-mapping tools (as will be described later in this document), and building accountability for improved outcomes into the state’s regulatory process actively supports this commitment.

## How Climate Change Affects Disproportionately Impacted Communities

Coloradans are already experiencing impacts from climate change, from hotter, drier summers to record-breaking fire seasons and floods that require years for communities to fully recover. It is well known that climate change will affect everyone in Colorado, yet the impacts will not impact everyone to the same degree. People of color, Indigenous people, lower-income individuals, historically underrepresented groups, children and older adults, and those experiencing multiple environmental burdens are all considered “disproportionately impacted” by climate change. Notably, many of these same communities have been historically excluded from decision making about environmental policies and programs - a pattern that has led to unjust and ineffective outcomes. When policies are determined by uniform groups of people who have historically had access to power, those decisions tend to favor those groups and disadvantage other groups, maintaining or worsening disparities. Successful climate action, through effective mitigation and adaptation, is unlikely without centering the voices, needs, assets, insights of disproportionately impacted communities.



Ideally, all options shared in this framework should be utilized. At the same time, there may exist real limitations in implementing all options at once. Disproportionately impacted communities should be identified, informed, consulted, and involved early in the process so they have the opportunity to inform the development of reduction strategies needed to address climate change in Colorado. As an institution charged with the protection of public health and the environment, the Division has an obligation to also actively prioritize policies, programs, and decisions that result in measurable benefits for disproportionately impacted communities.

Climate change is a threat multiplier, meaning it exacerbates adverse conditions for people already burdened by historic and current harms to health, social wellbeing, political influence, economic conditions, or environmental quality. These harms may exist due to the impacts of structural racism, classism,

pollution, and lower historic investment in community infrastructure and resources relative to other areas. Communities already dealing with these existing burdens tend to be more vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. For example, economic impacts from climate change, such as rising grocery bills and utility bills (from increased heating and cooling), can spell catastrophe for families already struggling to make ends meet.

Existing health disparities can also be worsened by climate change impacts, such as heat extremes and poor air quality from wildfires. Compounding these disparities is the fact that air pollution tends to be higher in and around disproportionately impacted communities. For example, studies have shown that people living in poverty are 1.35 times more burdened by particulate matter (PM) than the overall population. Black people are exposed to PM around 1.54 times more than the overall population and Hispanic people have about 1.2 times the exposure of non-Hispanic white people.<sup>1</sup> Black individuals are 36 percent more likely to experience asthma attacks and are three times more likely to need emergency care or die from asthma-related complications than non-Hispanic white people.<sup>2</sup> Black people are also 1.5 to 2 times more

1 Mikati I, Benson AF, Luben TJ, Sacks JD, Richmond-Bryant J. (2018). Disparities in Distribution of Particulate Matter Emission Sources by Race and Poverty Status. *Am J Public Health*. Accessed from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29470121/>.

2. Morello-Frosch R, Pastor M, Sadd J, and Shonkoff S (2009). The Climate Gap: Inequalities in How Climate Change Hurts Americans & How to Close the Gap. Accessed from: [http://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/ClimateGapReport\\_full\\_report\\_web.pdf](http://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/ClimateGapReport_full_report_web.pdf).

likely to die from heat-related causes than non-Hispanic white individuals.<sup>2</sup> Individuals and families who may already be dealing with chronic health conditions, inadequate access to healthcare or insurance, or a lack of clear and reliable information may also be more vulnerable to impacts from climate change.

## Addressing Impacts

Effective climate change mitigation is essential to protecting all Coloradans, especially disproportionately impacted communities. The time for bold and data-driven strategies to reduce GHG emissions is now. Such strategies have the potential to either worsen disparities or to actively promote equity. The state is committed to use GHG reduction strategies as an opportunity to work toward racial equity and economic justice.

Achieving this outcome requires us to commit to looking at issues and decisions through a new lens and to question long-standing processes and procedures. Who is involved in creating policy? Who influences policy decisions? Who stands to benefit from decisions and why? Are regulations being developed in ways that prioritize equity? Does input come from representative communities and a complete range of stakeholders? Are strategies being developed with a variety of needs and circumstances in mind and with direct input from communities? It is also important to keep in mind that while better engagement and representation are critical, they are no substitute for concrete and measurable action to address historical injustices and longstanding disparities. Unless Colorado's climate change response proactively makes equity a central priority, it may perpetuate harm to disproportionately impacted communities.

In order to be meaningful partners in the vital work to improve equity in the United States, it is important to acknowledge that state government has a history of being a part of the problem when it comes to inequalities in communities. We want to acknowledge that some governmental laws and rules have caused systemic barriers that impact some communities more than others. Systemic inequities have deep roots within the history of our state and our nation, and we want to acknowledge that some laws—whether



intentional or not—have caused some communities to be disproportionately impacted by pollution and other environmental injustices. Governmental laws, policies, and practices continue to create a human hierarchy and determine, based on race, economic class, access to power, and other characteristics, who benefits and who is burdened. This can be seen in governmental initiatives conducted *for* communities instead of *with* communities, resulting in solutions that do not address the reality of people's lives and may create new injustices. As state government, we are committed to working together with individuals, families, and communities to build equity and justice principles into systems and processes addressing climate change in Colorado.

2. Morello-Frosch R, Pastor M, Sadd J, and Shonkoff S (2009). The Climate Gap: Inequalities in How Climate Change Hurts Americans & How to Close the Gap. Accessed from: [http://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/ClimateGapReport\\_full\\_report\\_web.pdf](http://dornsife.usc.edu/assets/sites/242/docs/ClimateGapReport_full_report_web.pdf).

## A Reflection of Many Voices

The Climate Equity Framework was developed with input from members of disproportionately impacted communities, organizations that serve communities, local governments with climate equity and community engagement expertise, other state agencies, and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency environmental justice experts. Input opportunities have ranged from large public listening sessions to small community conversations, as well as online surveys and written comments submitted by email. Special attention was given to providing accessible input opportunities by offering meetings and materials in Spanish and holding meetings over the lunch hour and in the evening. The entire development and public comment process occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, which made in-person meetings impossible and shifted all input opportunities to a virtual format. This made it easier for some people to participate but also made organic conversations and relationship-building challenging and may have presented barriers to participation for people without adequate Internet access.

State staff would like to express gratitude for the hours of work, ideas, and feedback shared by so many passionate people. This framework is an important starting point but also a living document that will evolve over time as we continue to work together to implement Colorado's climate change strategies with equity in mind. The systems and practices that have created inequities were not built overnight and it will

take time, diligence, and the collaboration of many people and organizations to build a better future together over the coming years.

Coloradans helped shape the Framework in the following ways:

- The Climate Equity Advisory Committee was created, made up of environmental justice, equity, community engagement, and climate professionals who provided essential expertise and thought work to help shape the framework (see [Appendix A](#) for a detailed list of members).
- Over 600 people participated in two listening sessions on the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Roadmap and the Climate Equity Framework, in English and Spanish; people who were new to giving public comment were asked to share their thoughts first.
- Three community conversations (one in Spanish) were held to learn more about what community members value most and how they prefer to engage with government.
- Members of the public and community organizations completed surveys on engagement strategies and priorities, and
- Many written comments were submitted by email and via the comment form available on the Air Pollution Control Division website.

All of this public input was essential in helping develop this framework and inform the state Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Roadmap, as well as informing the Division's stakeholder engagement planning for GHG reduction rules. Even with all of this engagement, voices were missed at least in part because participation in meetings and surveys during the COVID-19 pandemic made such engagement especially difficult.





# Colorado's Climate Equity Principles

Climate change is interconnected with many aspects of society including human health, our economy, housing, and transportation. In order to be truly equitable, climate strategies must also consider these interconnections and explore potential impacts, both positive and negative, direct and indirect,

on disproportionately impacted communities. The following principles are intended to help guide discussions on the development of climate strategies.

In order to promote equity, Colorado's response to climate change will strive to align with the principles below:



**Principle 1: Equitable Representation**—The greenhouse gas (GHG) policy process should provide easily accessible opportunities for any interested person to participate. Policies that impact communities should be shaped by community input.

**Principle 2: Prioritizing Benefits**—For GHG reduction strategies with the potential to provide benefits to individuals or communities, disproportionately impacted communities should be prioritized. Intentionally investing in these communities, while actively reducing harm to them is critical to equitable climate action.

**Principle 3: Economic Impacts**—GHG reduction strategies should reduce costs, including household as well as currently externalized costs, and increase

economic benefits for disproportionately impacted communities wherever possible.

**Principle 4: Health Impacts**—GHG reduction strategies should minimize negative health impacts and increase health benefits for disproportionately impacted communities.

**Principle 5: Access to Solutions**—GHG reduction strategies should be shaped by community input and promote solutions and technologies in ways that meet the diverse needs of individuals, families, and communities, as much as possible.

**Principle 6: Building Resilience**—GHG reduction strategies should improve resilience and quality of life for disproportionately impacted communities.

# Improving Community Engagement

A key component of equitable climate action is effective community engagement within the policy process. Meaningful engagement enables individuals and communities to participate in decisions about activities that may impact environmental conditions in their area and/or their health. It also requires that their input has the power to influence the final decision.<sup>3</sup> Policies that are shaped by community and stakeholder input are more likely to have better outcomes and fewer unintended (or perhaps more accurately “under-considered”) consequences. It is important to provide meaningful ways for people to engage early and often throughout the process, and to ensure that perspectives and ideas generated through engagement can truly impact the outcomes of the process.

For years, Division and Commission staff have worked to provide effective stakeholder processes. Yet, as with most things, there is room for improvement, and because of the interconnectedness between climate change and equity, continual improvement is essential. Rulemaking proceedings are often very technical in nature, time-consuming, and involve attorneys and technical experts to ensure implementable, technically feasible, and legally supportable rules. However, the process can affect the comfort or ability of community members to engage in the ways that they would prefer. Division and Commission staff are working to make processes more accessible through improved stakeholder engagement practices, updates to the Commission procedural rules, and the coordination of attorneys who are willing to represent community members at no cost; however, these efforts will take time and there are legal limits to changing the process. The state must continually look for ways to make it easier for community members to provide meaningful input on the policies that affect them.

## Best Practices

Several best practices for working with historically marginalized and underrepresented groups, as well as direct community input are helping inform these improvements, including the following (see [Appendix B](#) for a factsheet with more details on best practices).

1. Understand, respect, and acknowledge the histories of marginalization and mistrust.

Disproportionately impacted communities have experienced a long and painful history of systemic racism and classism. Due to a combination of overt and harmful discriminatory actions, unjust laws, and unconscious bias, many communities across the nation are still grappling with challenges rooted in long-standing societal inequities. Throughout history, government has been a vehicle for many racist and classist laws, policies, and programs, creating a system that benefits some, at the expense of others. Individuals and communities who have been, and in many cases continue to be, harmed by these practices may find little reason to trust the government, regardless of the sincerity of its individual representatives. The process of making government more worthy of trust and of healing past harms will take time and repeated, consistent effort.

In order to improve engagement with communities who have been marginalized and are now disproportionately impacted by the climate crisis, it is vital to give special attention to their unique histories.<sup>4</sup> Unsurprisingly, this history has often fostered mistrust within impacted and disenfranchised communities.<sup>5</sup> This mistrust can hamper engagement with communities if not given special and explicit attention.

*State staff can work to understand, respect, and acknowledge the histories of marginalization and mistrust by:*

- Including racially and ethnically diverse representation on advisory groups, as well as boards and commissions. This is an important step in ensuring that the needs of communities are carried over into programmatic action and policy.<sup>5</sup>
- Asking questions like, “What mistakes have been made in the past? How did government agencies contribute to the experiences of communities?”

3. EPA Environmental Justice website, Learn about Environmental Justice, <https://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/learn-about-environmental-justice>.

4. Aguilar-Gaxiola, S., Deeb-Sossa, N., Elliott, K., King, R. T., Magaña, C. G., Miller, E., Sala, M., Sribney, W. M., and Breslau, J. (2008). Building partnerships: Conversations with communities about mental health needs and community strengths. Monograph # 2, UC Davis Center for Reducing Health Disparities. Sacramento, CA: UC Davis.

5. Bergstrom, D., Rose, K., Olinger, J., & Holley, K. (2012). The Community Engagement Guide for Sustainable Communities. *The Sustainable Communities Initiative*. PolicyLink & Kirwan Institute. Oakland, CA.

What specific types of marginalization (geographic, linguistic, economic, racial discrimination, etc.) are communities facing and how do these intersect with climate change?” “Is there additional support, resources or information that would be helpful to allow you to most meaningfully engage as a stakeholder?”

- Offering multiple ways for community members to engage and recognize the varying levels of voice, power, and impact that they afford.
- Respect community members’ time but using existing survey or interview data and/or coordinating with other engagement efforts where possible.
- Acknowledging past harms that have been caused directly or indirectly by government action during public meetings and in writing, when appropriate.
- When seeking community input, striving to ensure input is demonstrably incorporated in outcomes (policies, projects) and follow up with community contributors to reflect these specific influences.

## 2. Manage expectations by being upfront and honest.

There is a clear power and information differential when engaging with people from disproportionately impacted communities. Moreover, community members might have multiple touchpoints with state agencies working on seemingly disconnected initiatives. Being clear about the scope, goals, and engagement process for each engagement activity is crucial. This level-setting helps set the stage for authentic and productive engagement. It gives both government staff and community members a baseline understanding of how much can be done on a given topic, the ways in which change can be affected, and the kind of input that can help shape policies, actions, and initiatives. Beginning community engagement from a place of authenticity, honesty, and candor is one of many actions that can help build a sense of trust.

*State staff can clearly and transparently communicate what stakeholders can expect by:*

- Openly acknowledging the scope of the work so that community members understand how they can and cannot engage and how their engagement can impact outcomes, and how they can connect with local and regional efforts.
- Transparently describing the team’s roles, responsibilities, and capacities as well as any constraints that are present. Financial and time constraints should be included.<sup>6</sup>

- Developing and using regular, consistent communication channels to communicate early and often (throughout the entire process) to ensure that all parties remain informed.<sup>5</sup> In order to select communication channels, ask community members how they prefer to receive information, consider trying unconventional strategies, such as social media and faith groups or neighborhood message boards, and evaluate the approaches to continually improve messaging.

## 3. Use Effective Modes of Community Engagement and Communication.

Community engagement can generally be classified into five types: inform, consult, involve, collaborate, and empower. The appropriate level of engagement will vary depending on the situation. Understanding which kind of engagement is being pursued can help to determine what modes of communication will be most effective.

The IAP2 Spectrum of Community Participation on the following page illustrates the scale of community engagement ranging from no involvement to empowerment, including the message each level of engagement conveys to the community.<sup>7</sup> The graphic can be used to identify the current level of an organization’s engagement, then to set intentional and measurable goals for improvement and to communicate them to stakeholders in clear, transparent ways. By giving community members leadership roles, informing them about the issues and the potential solutions, and building trust, greater impacts on decision making are possible. While legal, financial, and staffing limitations exist within state government that make it difficult or impossible to exercise “empowerment” for some decisions or processes, finding ways to expand public influence where possible and being upfront about what degree of influence is available will promote more productive engagement work. The methods of communication also matter. Finding out how community members like to receive information and being willing to use those preferred channels is important. These channels may include things like text, phone calls, NextDoor, What’s App or other social media platforms.

5. Bergstrom, D., Rose, K., Olinger, J., & Holley, K. (2012). The Community Engagement Guide for Sustainable Communities. *The Sustainable Communities Initiative*. PolicyLink & Kirwan Institute. Oakland, CA.

6. Groundwork USA. (2020). Best Practices for Meaningful Community Engagement: Tips for Engaging Historically Underrepresented Populations in Visioning and Planning. Groundwork USA.

7. International Association for Public Participation. [www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org). (2020). Public Participation Pillars.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	<b>INFORM</b>	<b>CONSULT</b>	<b>INVOLVE</b>	<b>COLLABORATE</b>	<b>EMPOWER</b>
<b>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL</b>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
<b>PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC</b>	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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*Accessibility Note: This figure was produced by the International Association for Public Participation ([iap2.org](http://iap2.org)) describing the “Spectrum of Public Participation” to help groups define the public’s role in public engagement processes. The Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.*

#### 4. Prioritize local knowledge and concerns.

Each community is different and has a unique set of circumstances. There is an incredible variety of disproportionately impacted communities in Colorado, each with their own cultures, social and economic networks, and power dynamics. All communities have their own unique assets and rich perspectives. This diversity provides opportunities to leverage local knowledge in order to affect change. The diversity of experience is also a powerful tool in creating lasting change, as communities have an incredible range of assets to contribute to the process. Focusing on local knowledge and concerns, after explicitly acknowledging the scope and parameters of the project, should be of critical importance.<sup>4</sup>

*State staff can elevate local knowledge and concerns by:*

- Holding listening sessions and community conversations to better understand the concerns of community members. Provide space for community members and leaders to elevate their existing issues of concern, beyond government-determined agendas and priorities.
- Making a concerted effort to identify and work with new groups, especially those that address systems-level perspectives on climate equity, not just the typical advocacy organizations. For example, including grassroots affordable housing organizations at the table when discussing the potential equity considerations of a transportation rule may prove valuable.
- Researching organizations and leaders before forming partnerships to ensure that they are actually supported by the community they claim to be representing. Sometimes organizations can

4. Aguilar-Gaxiola, S., Deeb-Sossa, N., Elliott, K., King, R. T., Magaña, C. G., Miller, E., Sala, M., Sribney, W. M., and Breslau, J. (2008). Building partnerships: Conversations with communities about mental health needs and community strengths. Monograph # 2, UC Davis Center for Reducing Health Disparities. Sacramento, CA: UC Davis.

even be harmful or only serve a specific and unique group, and do not always accurately represent the community.

- Cultivating partnerships with cultural brokers and other trusted community partners.
  - Ensure that partners are compensated for time and expertise whenever possible.
5. Supporting the protection of the well-being, interests, and rights of communities.

The state is prioritizing engagement with disproportionately impacted communities because they are especially vulnerable to the potential impacts of the climate crisis. As such, special and considerable attention should be given to protecting these communities from further harm, as well as supporting their own ability to protect themselves from harm. Respondents to the Climate Equity Survey (see [Appendix D](#)) ranked “keeping my family healthy” and “keeping my family safe in the event of an emergency” as top priorities. State agencies have a responsibility to ensure that the well-being, interests, and rights of Colorado communities are protected and bolstered through the engagement process.

*State staff can protect the well-being, interests, and rights of communities by:*

- Seeking guidance from the community members and ethics boards about any research or data gathering procedures.<sup>4</sup>
  - Providing access to accurate and understandable monitoring data and other information to help communities stay informed.
6. Earn trust through partnerships.

Partnerships are at the heart of any successful community engagement. Building relationships with community leaders and organizations is one of the most important undertakings when engaging disproportionately impacted communities. Building partnerships will help government agencies keep the needs and concerns of the community at the forefront of the engagement process. Having individuals, committees, and organizations that can help ground the work in the community’s concerns will help ensure that the legacies of mistrust and ineffective action are not continued.

*State staff can nurture partnerships that engender community trust by:*

- Hosting or co-hosting events with local partners where community organizations, groups, and advocacy organizations can meet to develop partnerships. This provides an opportunity to build partnerships between the government agencies and local organizations and for organizations to discover new potential collaborations.<sup>5</sup>
- Participate in existing community activities and events, to make it easier and more time-efficient for community members to engage.
- Identifying and working with existing organizations doing climate change work at the local level, including local government and community-based organizations, among others. Finding opportunities for state-level actors to support these local efforts and provide resources, rather than asking local communities and groups to bear the burden of an expanded workload.
- Identifying and working with groups who are representative of the community.
- Looking for ways to elevate and address community concerns and to channel investments and projects that will benefit communities.
- Compensating community members for their time, participation, and expertise.
- Acknowledging past harms that have been caused directly or indirectly by government action during public meetings and in writing, when appropriate.
- Following up with community contributors to demonstrate how their input was reflected in outcomes.

4. Aguilar-Gaxiola, S., Deeb-Sossa, N., Elliott, K., King, R. T., Magaña, C. G., Miller, E., Sala, M., Sribney, W. M., and Breslau, J. (2008). Building partnerships: Conversations with communities about mental health needs and community strengths. Monograph # 2, UC Davis Center for Reducing Health Disparities. Sacramento, CA: UC Davis.

5. Bergstrom, D., Rose, K., Olinger, J., & Holley, K. (2012). The Community Engagement Guide for Sustainable Communities. *The Sustainable Communities Initiative*. PolicyLink & Kirwan Institute. Oakland, CA.



## 7. Communicate for understanding.

Community engagement, especially in relation to climate change, should be focused on building understanding, deepening mutual respect, and identifying actionable items moving forward. Climate change is a highly complex subject that can seem inaccessible without formal training. State staff should provide accessible outreach materials and related information in terms of language and presentation. Providing opportunities for community members and organizations to participate and engage in the language that is most comfortable for them should also be a high priority.

### *State staff can communicate effectively by:*

- Developing partnerships with local leaders, especially from non-English speaking communities, to co-identify potential barriers to engagement as well as potential solutions.<sup>5</sup>
- Developing partnerships with leaders from local communities to craft messaging that is relevant and impactful to that local community.
- Promoting language justice by ensuring that materials at public meetings are translated in culturally relevant ways and, when possible, that simultaneous interpretation is provided.<sup>5</sup>
- Identifying any trusted facilitators in the community that can help to make community members feel more welcome and engaged.<sup>5</sup>

5. Bergstrom, D., Rose, K., Olinger, J., & Holley, K. (2012). The Community Engagement Guide for Sustainable Communities. *The Sustainable Communities Initiative*. PolicyLink & Kirwan Institute. Oakland, CA.

- Using images and other visuals to communicate concepts quickly and clearly.<sup>8</sup>
- Avoiding scientific jargon, technical terms, acronyms, and overly complex explanations. Make use of glossaries and laying the foundation of common terms at the start of the meeting or presentation.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to these practices, community input during the development of this framework suggested additional things we can do to make meetings more accessible, including:

- Holding meetings at different times, including evenings, so working individuals and families can conveniently participate. Providing refreshments, offering childcare and transportation support, like free bus passes, when possible, to reduce barriers to participation.
- Holding meetings at trusted locations in the community, including schools, recreation centers, and libraries. Walking into a big government building with security guards and commissioners sitting at a dais can feel unsafe and intimidating to attendees.

- Providing updates in multiple ways. Most people said they prefer email but many participants also requested updates by text or Wi-Fi-based apps like What'sApp.
- Providing multiple ways for people to provide input beyond oral public comment, such as online comment forms, surveys, and small community conversations.
- Issuing meeting notices at least 30 days in advance, to allow people to make arrangements to participate.
- Continuing to offer remote meeting access, even once in-person meetings are possible again, because it makes it easier for many people to participate. It will be important to address digital divides and continue to advocate for the expansion of quality Internet access for all Coloradans.

Staff will continue to gather input on how community members prefer to engage and stay informed about state climate change initiatives and will continue to improve and refine engagement activities.

8. Stonewall, J., Fjelstad, K., Dorneich, M., Shenk, L., Krejci, C., & Passe, U. (2017). Best Practices for Engaging Underserved Populations. *Proceedings of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society Annual Meeting*, 61(1), 130-134. doi:10.1177/1541931213601516.

# Advisory Groups

There are two important advisory groups whose input supports the state’s work to achieve equitable climate action.

## Climate Equity Advisory Committee

The Climate Equity Advisory Committee was established in July 2020 to help guide and inform the concepts included in this framework. The group is made up of 20 professionals with equity, environmental justice, climate, and community engagement expertise (see [Appendix A](#) for a detailed membership list). These individuals generously contributed their time, energy, and ideas to help the state chart a path toward meaningful action to promote equity in its climate regulations. Going forward, this advisory committee will provide equity-based recommendations and community engagement suggestions for potential GHG reduction rules being considered.

## Climate Equity Community Advisory Group

Using the Climate Equity Data Viewer, 10 individuals were selected for the Climate Equity Community Advisory Group. Group representatives are members of the public from communities from across the state who have an interest in climate change and equity issues and will prioritize representation from disproportionately impacted communities. They will meet regularly to discuss upcoming GHG reduction rule concepts, engagement plans, and other relevant climate equity-related items. They provide formal, written recommendations to the Commission about GHG reduction rules being considered. Individual members and the group as a whole also have the option to participate in rulemakings as a party, which would enable them to participate more closely in negotiations over the rule details, if they desire.





# Evaluating Potential Policy Impacts

Again, more inclusive and representative community engagement is only one piece of the puzzle and means little without a true commitment to better outcomes for communities. HB 19-1261 requires that impacts of potential rules on disproportionately impacted communities be evaluated. This is a vital step to ensuring equity principles are represented in rules that the Commission adopts. The Climate Equity Advisory Committee developed the following checklist of questions to help the Division and

Commission evaluate potential impacts of proposed rules on disproportionately impacted communities. These questions are designed to anticipate potential benefits or burdens to disproportionately impacted communities from rules being considered and generate discussion and ultimately, shape rule development. Each question pertains to one or more of the state climate equity principles (see page 7) which are listed in parentheses for each question.

Key evaluation questions for Air Quality Control Commissioners and Division staff to consider during rule development and rulemakings:

1. How did the Air Pollution Control Division and the Air Quality Control Commission encourage community input and participation in the policy process? How was community input used? **(Principle 1: Equitable Representation)**
2. How will this rule impact costs for disproportionately impacted communities? **(Principle 2: Prioritizing Benefits and Principle 3: Economic Impacts)**
3. What are the financial benefits of compliance and are they being directed toward/prioritized within disproportionately impacted communities? **(Principle 2: Prioritizing Benefits and Principle 3: Economic Impacts)**

4. What are the potential negative and positive impacts of the rule on physical and mental health? How can negative health impacts be minimized and positive impacts maximized for disproportionately impacted communities? **(Principle 2: Prioritizing Benefits and Principle 4: Health Impacts)**
5. What barriers and benefits exist for disproportionately impacted communities to adopting proposed mitigation technologies? How are barriers being addressed and benefits being maximized? **(Principle 2: Prioritizing Benefits and Principle 5: Access to Solutions)**
6. How can the rule improve community resilience or quality of life for people living in disproportionately impacted communities? **(Principle 6: Resilience)**

## Other Important Questions to Ask

There are potential impacts of state climate policy and programs that are also important to consider. These are questions that need to be asked and, in some cases, coordinated across multiple state agencies, local governments, or other partner organizations.

1. What are the plans for following up with communities after this rulemaking? **(Principle 1: Equitable Representation)**
2. If jobs are being created, what is in place to direct those benefits (including capacity-building, training) toward disproportionately impacted communities? **(Principle 2: Prioritizing Benefits and Principle 3: Economic Impacts)**
3. How does this policy align with the existing land use patterns and multimodal transportation systems? **(Principle 6: Resilience)**
4. What interagency or cross-sector collaboration opportunities are there to advance proposed climate policy and programs?
5. Who is already operating in this space and are there adjacent policies that should be considered?
6. How does the Social Cost of Carbon weigh into the economic and health benefits of proposals specifically on disproportionately impacted communities? **(Principle 2: Prioritizing Benefits and Principle 3: Economic Impacts)**

# Air Pollution Control Division Commitments

Many of the best practices from the previous pages and recommendations from community stakeholders have been incorporated into the Division's plans for stakeholder engagement for GHG reduction rules.

## 1. Early Stakeholder Listening Sessions and Q&A Sessions

Before rules are developed, the Division will hold one or more public listening session to accomplish the following: to share general ideas about the goal of potential rules; to listen to community concerns, priorities, and ideas for reducing the burden of potential rules; and to enhance and direct benefits toward disproportionately impacted communities. The public, non-profit organizations, and local governments will be invited to participate in these listening sessions. When a rule has the potential to impact specific geographic areas and/or industries, the Division will conduct targeted outreach and, in some cases, host community meetings to ensure local voices are elevated within the process. When possible, Division staff will be available for questions, dialogue, and/or a workshop-style meeting.

Listening sessions will be available early in the rule development process and will be offered in-person (when safe) and remotely and will include:

- A simple, plain-language overview of the statewide GHG reduction goals and general concepts of the Greenhouse Gas Pollution Reduction Roadmap, and specific rule concepts and objectives being considered; and
- Key questions to help frame discussions and gather useful community input for rule development, including equity considerations, community priorities, suggestions for rule concepts, and common questions, anticipated concerns, or areas of confusion.

Meetings and plain-language fact sheets will be made available in the two most commonly spoken languages in a community (generally English and Spanish in Colorado). Meetings will provide public input opportunities via multiple platforms, offering meetings in a variety of locations and at different days of the week and times of day to make them more accessible.

## 2. Community Conversations

When a GHG reduction rule has potential implications for a specific disproportionately impacted community or communities, small community conversations (20 people or fewer) will be held to provide opportunities for deeper discussions of rule concepts, community concerns, and potential solutions. This type of forum is especially valuable because it helps staff better-understand the lived experience and priorities of impacted communities and improves the transparency and quality of the state regulatory process. Summaries from these conversations are used to inform rule development. The Division will keep interested stakeholders informed throughout the rule development process, including notices of input and engagement opportunities through emails and website updates and other means, as appropriate.

## 3. Follow-up and Tracking Progress

In order for community engagement to be worthwhile, it ultimately needs to influence decisions and outcomes that affect communities. It is important that stakeholders know how their input was used and what impact it had. The Division will work to accomplish this by using summarized stakeholder input to respond to key questions (see section below on Evaluating Potential Policy Impacts) within the GHG reduction rulemaking record.

Measuring how GHG reduction regulations are impacting the health and economic wellbeing and ensuring the state decision-making process is becoming more inclusive and effective will be critical to determining the impacts of these efforts. To do this, the Division will track and report on progress with climate and equity measures, including estimated air quality impacts of GHG reduction rules, related changes in household energy burden, and public evaluations of state stakeholder engagement opportunities on a publicly available online dashboard.



#### 4. Expanding Representation During Rulemakings

Stakeholder input and public comment are important contributions to the rulemaking process, however individuals and groups also have the option to request “party status.” Parties to a rulemaking proceeding are given significant opportunity to provide its insight and positions to the Commission regarding the proceeding through the prehearing process. This includes the participation in party status conferences and prehearing conferences and through the filing of prehearing statements, rebuttal statements, and supplemental filings. Parties are also given ample time to provide testimony and cross-examine witnesses at the hearing. While having an attorney is not a requirement of being granted party status, it can be helpful in understanding and navigating the party process. Historically, most parties either represent industry, non-governmental organizations, or local governments and rarely are community members or community coalitions.

In an effort to make it easier to request party status for those who want it, the Division has compiled a list of attorneys who are willing to represent community members and groups who are interested in participating in Commission GHG reduction rulemakings as parties, free of cost. The Division is grateful to the attorneys and law clinics who have volunteered their time to help improve representation in this one small, yet important, way. If you are an attorney and are interested in helping with this effort, please email [climatechange@state.co.us](mailto:climatechange@state.co.us).

# Empowering the Process through Data

Data mapping is a powerful tool to support stakeholder discussions, policy and program development, decision making, and measuring progress.<sup>9</sup> While no mapping tool or data set is perfect, having visual and geographic representations of relevant and overlapping information allows for impact-driven and objective decisions, leading to better outcomes. To that end, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has developed the Climate Equity Data Viewer and the [Data Viewer for Disproportionately Impacted Communities in Colorado](#) and is also currently working with Colorado State University to create the Colorado EnviroScreen tool.

## Climate Equity Data Viewer

To prioritize engagement efforts and help evaluate potential policy impacts, staff developed the Climate Equity Data Viewer. This data viewer is a mapping tool that creates a visual representation of certain demographic data detailed in House Bill 19-1261 (such as race, ethnicity, income, and education), along with cumulative environmental burdens across Colorado. The tool supports a method to rank geographic areas based on their relative cumulative environmental and potential for disproportionate climate impacts through a climate equity score.



9. Nelson, Julie, Brooks, Lisa. (2016). Government Alliance on Race and Equity: Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity. Accessed from: <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/racial-equity-toolkit-opportunity-operationalize-equity/>.

A beta version of the Climate Equity Data Viewer was released in February 2021 for public comment. The public comment period was extended to April 2021 at the request of community members and community advocacy organizations. The Division is grateful to all the individuals and organizations who took time to provide feedback. The final version of the data viewer reflects this feedback, including: creating an easier-to-navigate landing page, clearer language and display, and updated input data, including expanded climate and health indicators, to name a few improvements.

Prior to the passage of the Environmental Justice Act there was no statutory definition for “disproportionately impacted community,” nor were data-based thresholds provided to help clearly identify where disproportionately impacted communities are located. After the passage of the Environmental Justice Act, the final Climate Equity Data Viewer was updated to include the preliminary definition of disproportionately impacted communities:

- Census block groups where more than 40% of households are low-income,
- Census block groups where more than 40% of households include people who identify themselves as people of color, or
- Census block groups where more than 40% of households are housing cost-burdened.

This tool is being used until the Colorado EnviroScreen tool is finalized in summer 2022.

### Access the Climate Equity Data Viewer

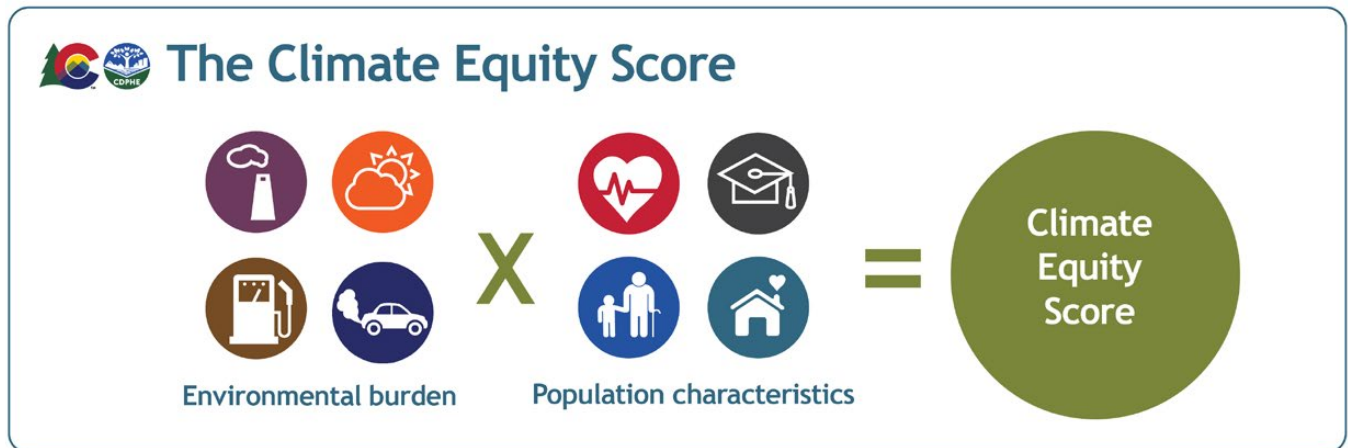
For more details about the Climate Equity Data Viewer and what goes into climate equity cumulative impact scores, see [Appendix C](#).

The Climate Equity Data Viewer presents information for the entire state by census block groups. There are 21 total demographic and environmental measures (see [Appendix C](#) for details), some of which are adopted directly from the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s EJSCREEN tool](#). Other measures are sourced from various programs at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (“the Department”), and other agencies, such as the Colorado Department of Natural Resources. The measures are used to calculate cumulative climate equity scores using a method similar to [California’s Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment EnviroScreen](#). These scores are used to inform the Division’s engagement priorities.

The climate equity score combines population characteristics with environmental burdens. The score goes from 0 to 100, with the highest score representing the highest burden. The climate equity score is a percentile, which is like a ranking. The number represents how many of the state’s census block groups have a lower score. Suppose a census block group has a climate equity score of 50. That means its climate equity score is higher than 50% of all census block groups in the state. A score of 90 means the climate equity score is higher than 90% of all census block groups in the state.

## The Data Viewer for Disproportionately Impacted Communities in Colorado

This mapping tool serves the purpose of visualizing communities across Colorado that meet the demographic component of the definition of disproportionately impacted communities under the



Environmental Justice Act (HB21-1266). It was created to make it easier to view those communities without overlaying the climate equity scores that are visible in the Climate Equity Data Viewer. The map includes census block groups with more than:

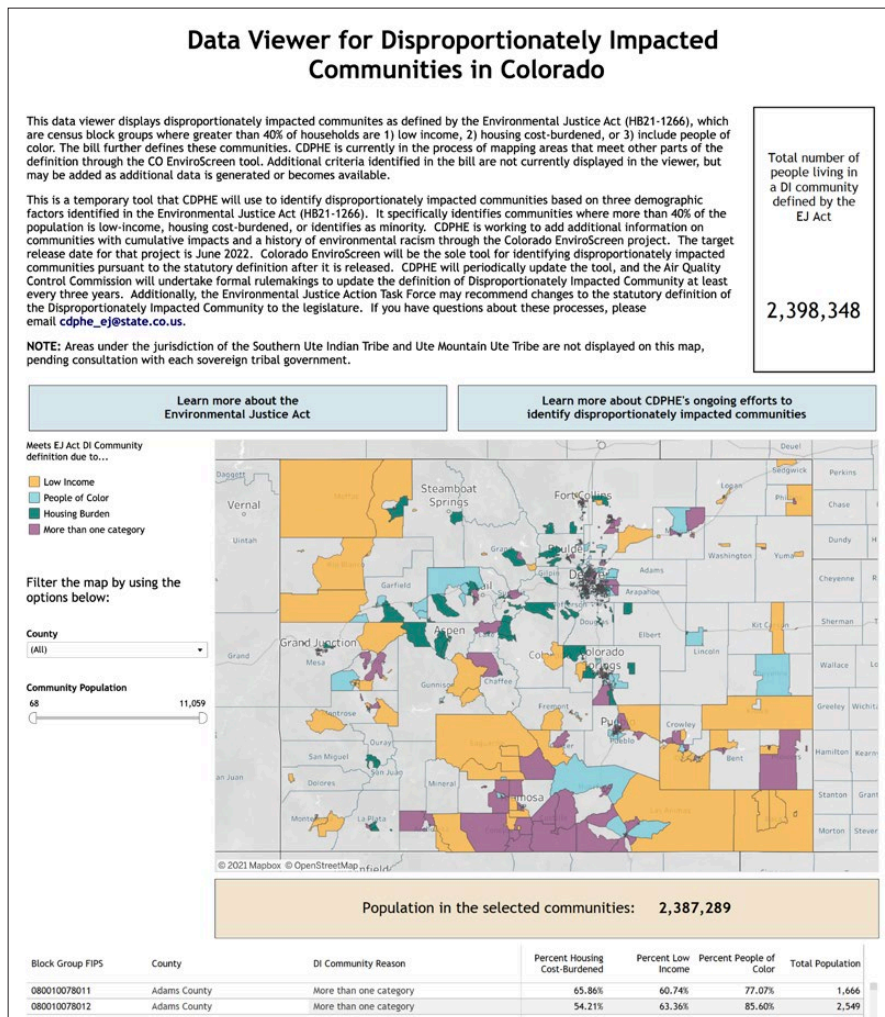
- 40% low-income households (at or below 200% of the federal poverty line),
- 40% of households including people who identify as people of color (any race or ethnicity besides non-Hispanic white) according to U.S. census bureau data, or
- 40% of households that are housing cost-burdened (spend more than 30% of monthly income on housing costs).

This tool is being used on a temporary basis until the Colorado EnviroScreen tool is finalized in summer 2022.

## Colorado EnviroScreen

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and a team at Colorado State University are currently working on an enhanced environmental health screening tool for Colorado called Colorado EnviroScreen. Like the Climate Equity Data Viewer and the Data Viewer for disproportionately impacted communities in Colorado, the CO EnviroScreen tool will enable users to identify disproportionately impacted communities based on the definition in Colorado’s Environmental Justice Act. CO EnviroScreen will be one way for the Colorado state government to address current and historic inequities by identifying communities in which to prioritize resources (i.e., eligibility for grants, priorities for enforcement and compliance actions, enhanced outreach for permitting, and other important decisions).

The mapping tool will be similar to the [Washington State Environmental Health Tool](#), the [New Jersey Environmental Mapping Tool](#), and the [CalEnviroScreen 4.0](#). It will highlight areas that have a disproportionate burden of health and/or environmental harm. By conducting an inclusive stakeholder process for developing the tool, the Department further hopes to build public trust and empower communities to become involved in decision-making. The Department also intends for CO EnviroScreen to help users maximize funding and resources for policy changes and other interventions to avoid, minimize, and mitigate environmental health risks and advance environmental justice and health equity in Colorado. Once the Colorado EnviroScreen tool is finalized, it will take the place of both the Climate Equity Data Viewer and the Data Viewer for Disproportionately Impacted Communities in Colorado. CO EnviroScreen will inform a wide variety of efforts in addition to GHG rulemakings.



# Recommendations

In addition to helping develop many of the principles, concepts, and strategies outlined in this framework, the Climate Equity Advisory Committee would like to share the following recommendations to promote further capacity building and improvements to state processes to advance climate equity:

- Additional staff and resources across state agencies to support climate equity work and contract with trusted community organizations.<sup>9</sup> There needs to be an emphasis on building capacity in equity modeling and equity in climate policy expertise.
- A continual commitment to making state boards and commissions more representative and diverse in terms of race, gender, and ethnicity.
- Continuing to make public meetings more accessible and more useful to stakeholders.
- Working to make relevant, succinct, plain-language information available to people so they can inform themselves to be able to actively participate in policy processes.
- Prioritizing compensating community stakeholders for their time and contributions to the process.
- Utilize the Social Cost of GHGs when evaluating economic and health impacts of climate mitigation strategies.
- A commitment to data collection and transparent reporting on community engagement and climate equity metrics.

# Conclusion

This framework is intended to highlight opportunities for climate equity within greenhouse gas reduction rules developed by the Air Pollution Control Division and heard before the Air Quality Control Commission. Staff recognize that nothing short of a long-term commitment to continual listening, learning, and improvement will be required to build trust with communities to advance equitable climate action. The state will need to devote ongoing attention to improving the accessibility and effectiveness of stakeholder engagement, to work with communities to identify equity impacts of climate policies, and to build publicly available reporting on equity metrics into decision-making procedures.

The Climate Equity Framework and complementary state initiatives must be dynamic by design. Commissions and staff will need to adapt to lessons learned through practice and evolve procedures with further study of best practices. The climate crisis can feel daunting, requiring all Coloradans to rapidly adopt sustainable ways to live, work, play, and do business. The economic and structural transitions are imperative to maintaining a livable planet for future generations and provide unique opportunities—opportunities to fundamentally reform decision-making processes, to raise marginalized voices in shaping solutions, and ultimately, opportunities to create a more just, equitable Colorado.

9. Nelson, Julie, Brooks, Lisa. (2016). Government Alliance on Race and Equity: Racial Equity Toolkit: An Opportunity to Operationalize Equity. Accessed from: <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/resources/racial-equity-toolkit-opportunity-operationalize-equity/>.

# Glossary of Terms

**The Air Pollution Control Division**, as part of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, implements and enforces Air Quality Control Commission regulations and relevant air quality laws. The Division works to protect Colorado's air quality, provides technical and scientific insight during the regulatory process, serves as staff to the Air Quality Control Commission, proposes new rules and regulations under relevant state laws to be considered by the Colorado Air Quality Control Commission, and implements rules adopted by the Air Quality Control Commission. ([Air Pollution Control Division website](#))

**The Air Quality Control Commission** is appointed by the governor and authorized by the Colorado General Assembly to oversee Colorado's air quality program according to the Colorado Air Pollution Prevention and Control Act, Section 25-7-101 et seq., C.R.S., as amended. The purpose of the commission is to adopt a cost-effective and efficient air quality management program that promotes clean and healthy air for Colorado's residents and visitors, protect Colorado's scenic and natural resources, and promotes statewide greenhouse gas pollution abatement. ([Air Quality Control Commission website](#))

**Census block groups** are clusters of blocks within a census tract (small subdivisions of a county). A census block is the smallest geographic unit used by the U.S. Census Bureau for tabulation of 100-percent data (data collected from all houses, rather than a sample of houses). Census blocks are usually smaller in area than census tracts and in a city, often look like a city block bounded on all sides by streets. ([U.S. Census Website](#))

**Disproportionately impacted community** are Census block groups that meet any of the following criteria:

- More than 40% of households are low-income, identify as people of color, or are housing cost-burdened,
- Have a history of environmental racism perpetuated through redlining, anti-Indigenous, anti-immigrant, anti-Hispanic, or anti-Black laws
- Experiences cumulative environmental burden, socioeconomic stressors, and lack of public participation that contribute to persistent disparities. ([Colorado House Bill 21-1266](#))

**Environmental justice** recognizes that all people have a right to breathe clean air, drink clean water, participate freely in decisions that affect their environment, live free of dangerous levels of toxic pollution, experience equal protection of environmental policies, and share the benefits of a prosperous and vibrant pollution-free economy. ([Colorado House Bill 21-1266](#))

**Greenhouse gases** (GHGs) are gases that trap heat in the atmosphere. These include carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O), fluorinated gases: hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, sulfur hexafluoride, and nitrogen trifluoride, and nitrous oxide. ([EPA overview of Greenhouse Gases](#))

**Housing cost burdened** means a household that spends more than thirty percent of its income on housing. ([Colorado House Bill 21-1266](#))

**Institutional racism** includes policies, practices, and procedures that work better for white people than for people of color, often unintentionally. ([Government Alliance on Racial Equity, Racial Equity Toolkit](#))

**Low income** means the median household income is less than or equal to two hundred percent of the federal poverty guideline. ([Colorado House Bill 21-1266](#))

**Resilience** is the ability of communities to rebound, positively adapt to, or thrive amidst changing conditions or challenges—including human-caused and natural disasters—and to maintain quality of life, healthy growth, durable systems, economic vitality, and conservation of resources for present and future generations. (Colorado House Bill 18-1394)

**A rulemaking** is the process by which the Air Quality Control Commission adopts and revises Colorado air quality standards and regulations, or "rules." ([Air Quality Control Commission Rulemaking Process Guidebook](#))

**Structural racism** is the history and current reality of institutional racism across all institutions, combining to create a system that negatively impacts communities of color. ([Government Alliance on Racial Equity, Racial Equity Toolkit](#))



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# Appendices

- Appendix A: [Climate Equity Framework Advisory Committee Members \(2020-2021\)](#)
- Appendix B: [Best Practices for Engaging Disproportionately Impacted Communities](#)
- Appendix C: [Climate Equity Data Viewer How-to, Glossary, and Methodology](#)
- Appendix D: [Summary of Community Survey Responses](#)



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